



Los Altos Police Department Tips for Businesses-Shoplifting Prevention

Train your employees to be courteous and alert. A thief who thinks that he or she is being watched is less likely to steal. Take steps to prevent shoplifting. It's easier and safer to prevent shoplifting than it is to deal with a shoplifter. Know the signs of shoplifting. Here are some common behaviors and things to watch for:

- Seems nervous.
- Avoids eye contact.
- Wanders around the store without buying anything.
- Leaves the store and returns to your business repeatedly in a short period of time.
- Stays in an area of your business where he or she is hard to see.
- Keeps watching you or is constantly looking around.

Use simple measures to discourage shoplifting such as:

- Stay alert at all times.
- Be friendly and polite to all customers.
- Ask customers if they need help.
- Keep your business neat, clean and orderly.
- Know where shoplifting is most likely to occur in your business.

Know what to do if shoplifting occurs. Remember to play it safe:

- Never accuse anyone of stealing.
- Never try to physically stop a shoplifter.
- Never lock the door to keep a shoplifter from leaving.
- Never chase a shoplifter out of your place of business.
- Remain at least arm's length away from the shoplifter.

Consider giving the shoplifter a chance to pay or put back the item. Be sure to know what was taken and where the customer hid it. Then politely ask the person a question, such as:

- "Are you ready to pay?"
- "Would you like a bag for that _____?" (Name the item taken).

Follow your instincts. Don't continue to confront a shoplifter if you start to feel frightened or uneasy. Get help when it's safe to do so. *Call the police if you sense a threat of violence.* Your personal safety is always more important. Use a log or some other method to share suspicions of shoplifting with your co-workers. When merchandise is displayed neatly in standard groups, three to four items per display, sales personnel can notice what is missing quickly. Place small expensive items in secure display cases close to sales personnel. A counter near an exit is an easy target for "grab and run" thieves. Display signs announcing that "Shoplifters will be prosecuted", and cooperate with the police and the prosecutor.

What should you do if you feel in danger of being attacked? Trust your gut feeling. You can often tell if a person is dangerous. He or she may seem to:

- * Get angry quickly.
- * Be looking for a fight.
- * Be about to explode.

Plan an escape route. It is important that you be able to get away from a dangerous situation. Make sure to:

- Have an escape route in advance and make sure all employees know it.
- Keep some distance between you and the potential threat.
- Try to prevent the person from getting between you and the door.
- Get help as soon as possible. *Call the police.* If you need to, leave your place of business as soon as possible and go for help.